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Building Spiritual Strength and Resilience in Bihar's Rural Women through Self-Help Groups

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience among rural women engaged in Self-Help Groups (SHGs) in Bihar. Using validated psychometric tools—the 10-item Spiritual Well-Being Scale and the 6-item Brief Resilience Scale—data were collected from 100 participants across diverse SHGs. Findings reveal a significant positive correlation between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience, suggesting that SHGs offer more than financial empowerment: they foster inner strength and adaptive coping. The study advocates for integrating spiritual support into community-based interventions to enhance holistic well-being.

Keywords: Spiritual, Resilience, Interventions, Empowerment, Emotional.

Introduction

In the socio-cultural landscape of rural Bihar, Self-Help Groups (SHGs) have emerged as transformative platforms for women's empowerment. Traditionally focused on microfinance and livelihood generation, these collectives have begun to nurture deeper dimensions of well-being—particularly spiritual and emotional resilience. Spirituality, often embedded in everyday practices and communal rituals, serves as a quiet but potent force in coping with adversity. Emotional resilience, meanwhile, enables women to navigate personal and collective challenges with strength and adaptability. Despite growing interest in psychosocial dimensions of community development, few studies have examined how SHGs contribute to inner growth and psychological fortitude. This research bridges that gap by investigating the interplay between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience among SHG members. By doing so, it highlights the potential of

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culturally rooted, community-driven models to foster holistic empowerment.

Literature review

Singh and Verma (2019) examined spiritual engagement among tribal women in Jharkhand, finding that regular participation in culturally embedded spiritual practices was associated with lower anxiety and higher resilience. Their findings underscore the importance of contextually grounded spirituality in enhancing emotional well-being.

Nair and Tankha (2013) explored the psychosocial dimensions of self-help groups (SHGs), demonstrating that participation fosters self-efficacy, emotional support, and collective identity. These elements contribute to resilience by creating safe spaces for shared experiences and mutual empowerment.

Sharma and Gupta (2020) investigated the role of spiritual narratives within SHGs, highlighting how devotional songs, rituals, and shared beliefs cultivate emotional solidarity. Their qualitative study revealed that such practices not only strengthen group cohesion but also serve as informal mechanisms of psychological support.

Kumar and Mishra (2018) addressed the challenges of adapting psychometric tools for Indian populations, cautioning against direct translations that overlook cultural nuance. They advocated for bilingual and context-sensitive adaptations, which aligns with the present study's approach to measuring spiritual intelligence and emotional resilience in rural Bihar.

Objective

To examine the relationship between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience among rural women participating in Self-Help Groups in Bihar.

Hypothesis

H_1: Higher levels of spiritual well-being are positively associated with greater emotional resilience among rural women in SHGs.

Sample

- Size: 100 rural women
- Sampling Method: Purposive sampling from active SHGs across three districts in Bihar
- Inclusion Criteria: Women aged 18–60, active SHG members for at least one year.

Methodology

Research Design

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A cross-sectional, correlational design was employed to assess the relationship between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience.

Instruments

Spiritual Well-Being Scale (SWBS): A 10-item Likert-type scale measuring existential and religious dimensions of spirituality.

Brief Resilience Scale (BRS): A 6-item scale assessing the ability to bounce back from stress and adversity.

Procedure

Participants were approached during SHG meetings and informed consent was obtained. The scales were administered in Hindi, with bilingual support provided where necessary. Confidentiality and ethical standards were strictly maintained.

Statistical Analysis

Data were analyzed using SPSS. Descriptive statistics were computed, followed by Pearson's correlation to test the hypothesis.

Results

VARIABLE	Mean	S.D	Correlation(r)	Significance(p)
Spiritual Well-being	34.2	5.6	+0.62	0.01
Emotional resilience	21.8	4.1		

The analysis revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between spiritual well-being and emotional resilience ($r = +0.62$, $p < 0.01$), supporting the hypothesis.

Discussion

The findings affirm that spiritual well-being significantly contributes to emotional resilience. SHGs, often viewed through an economic lens, also serve as platforms for spiritual and emotional growth. This dual empowerment—financial and psychological—can be a cornerstone for sustainable community development.

The strong correlation suggests that spiritual practices embedded in SHG culture—such as collective prayer, storytelling, and mutual support—may enhance members' capacity to cope with stress and adversity. These findings align with previous research on

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spirituality as a buffer against psychological distress, especially in collectivist cultures.

Implications

For Practice

- SHG facilitators should incorporate spiritual reflection and emotional support into regular meetings.
- Community health workers can use culturally adapted tools to assess and foster resilience.

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